

First Acquaintance with the Protectorate

The people are, as I was quick to realise after I had seen and spoken to the tribesman at the Khormakkar races, independent and virile, and later I was to find that they did not lack a sense of humour. In the Highlands they dress, even to this day, in blue cotton kilts which reach to the knee, leaving the upper part of the body bare, except for the vegetable oil and blue dye with which they rub their skin as a protection against the sun in summer and the cold in winter. The kilt is held in place by a leather cartridge belt which in turn supports a dagger, generally with a silver scabbard. A rifle and a pair of leather sandals complete the picture, except in the Colony where rifles and daggers, except for the privileged few, have to be surrendered to authority on entrance, and may not be carried on the person. In the Colony, too, and indeed in the more developed areas of the Protectorate, the blue kilt has given place to brightly coloured kilts made from silk and cotton cloth imported from Indonesia and India, and the blue dye and oil have been replaced by shirts and coats, and indeed, by collars and ties and trousers when the owners have come to this country either on business or for pleasure.

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2: Hickinbotham G-4, 5 (ca. 1931-ca. 1957)
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Aden

••• a rather more inferior donkey, and seemed to hold some sort of quasi-political appointment in the State; he spoke Urdu, which he had learnt during his police service in Aden. He and I conversed together in that language to the irritation of Europeans and Arabs alike who could not understand what we were saying. Perhaps it was as well. The Jemadar and I had quite an amusing time. The rest of the party followed on behind, with the doctor bringing up the rear after the baggage animals, ready to deal with any casualties.

We always started the daily march early in the morning after the lightest of meals and moved steadily forward until midday, when we would halt to rest and feed the animals and ourselves; just before sunset, we would select a camp site among the terraced fields at the side of the valley and a hot meal would be prepared by the cooks, while our servants set up our camp-beds in the open and we relaxed on rugs spread on the bare ground. Sleep came easily.

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On the last day as we approached our destination, we could see Al Qara gleaming white far above us on its hilltop and by mid-morning we were near the base of the hill. Just before noon we crossed a small rise and there on the flat ground immediately below the hill thousands of tribesmen were drawn up in lines awaiting our arrival. Blue kilts, indigo-dyed bodices, bobbed hair, rough leather sandals and the inevitable armoury of rifle, cartridge belt and silver sheathed dagger; they were as splendid as they were unexpected in that wild and seemingly sparsely populated country. Sultan Muhammed and I moved forward on foot to greet the Sultan who, dressed in a purple plush frock coat, a blue and yellow striped kilt and a head cloth of the same colours, was busily engaged acting as ringmaster in the midst of this amazing scene. Like his men he carried a rifle, and as we approached welcoming shots were fired by him and his immediate entourage and replied to by his son and my party. The Sultan and I exchanged the customary greeting and shook hands, and then I shook hands with the tribal leaders and walked down the ranks of tribesmen.

••• Up to this point everything had been remarkably well ordered and controlled, but when the Sultan who was by
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